

Transcript of the Testimony of

Date: January 9, 2018

Case: COMMUNITY MEETING OF THE PROPOSED
REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF NATIONAL
TEACHERS ACADEMY

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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEAR SOUTH COMMUNITY MEETING #1
PROPOSED REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE OF NATIONAL
TEACHERS ACADEMY

January 9, 2018

6:00 p.m.

Illinois Institute of Technology
Hermann Hall Auditorium

1 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATION:

2

3 HERALD "CHIP" JOHNSON, Family and Community
Engagement in Education

4

5 SHANI BOONE, Office of Diverse Learning and
Supports Services

6 LUIS RODRIGUEZ, Office of Diverse Learning and
Supports Services

7

8 ONSHELLE BLACKMON, Students in Temporary Living
Situations

9 TIFFANY TAYLOR, Talent Office

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1 MR. JOHNSON: Good evening, everyone. Let's
2 see if we can come together so we have time to
3 hear from all your community constituents tonight.

4 If you can grab your seats, I'm going to
5 do a short presentation prior to public comments.
6 I would like to say good evening to everybody,
7 South Loop, Drake, Chinatown, all of our
8 communities, and to everybody who came to be a
9 part of this community meeting tonight.

10 We have a lot to listen to, a lot to
11 present, and we want to do it in a respectful
12 manner tonight. We know that all voices are
13 important, so we want to make sure we hear them
14 appropriately. If you get to your seats, we'll
15 begin the presentation.

16 So this meeting is part of the
17 reassignment boundary change for National Teachers
18 Academy, which was proposed to the board on
19 December 1st following months of community
20 engagement leading up to the announcement.

21 You all have seen me. I am Chip Johnson,
22 the chief officer for Family and Community
23 Engagement for Chicago Public Schools, and I have
24 been part of this process since its inception

1 here.

2 We are here today on behalf of our acting
3 CEO, Dr. Janice Jackson, to share some basic
4 information and to hear from you about the
5 specific proposal. I'd also like to introduce to
6 some -- those that are here, Alderman Pat Dowell,
7 who's here with us tonight from the 3rd Ward and
8 Alderson Patrick Thompson from the 11th Ward.

9 (APPLAUSE.)

10 We also have -- remember, we're doing
11 respect. Thank you. We also have some principals
12 here in the building that are from some of our
13 schools. Would all of our Chicago Public Schools
14 principals please stand and be recognized for your
15 leadership. Just stand right where you are.

16 (APPLAUSE.)

17 So as I mentioned before, the purpose of
18 this meeting is to allow CEO Jackson and the board
19 office to hear feedback from you about the
20 specific proposal under discussion. I will start
21 by running through a brief description tonight,
22 and then I will give you the information on the
23 community information, how we will conduct it.
24 And after this, we will allow the remaining time

1 for you, the public comment.

2 In addition, we have representatives here
3 from the Office of Diverse Learning Supports and
4 Services, Shani Boone and Luis Rodriguez from
5 ODLSS; students living in temporary situations,
6 STLS program, Onshelle Blackmon; and then from the
7 Talent department, we have Tiffany Taylor that are
8 in the room.

9 They will be available for 30 minutes
10 after the conclusion of the public comment to
11 answer any questions you may have specific to
12 their areas of expertise. Please note that these
13 tablets are not formally part of the process, and
14 the stenographer that you see here that is taking
15 notes and the notetaker will not be present in
16 those conversations to record any comments that
17 are made.

18 The community meeting will take place
19 over the course of 2 hours from now until 8:00
20 o'clock, and my goal is to provide a brief
21 presentation followed by comment. If you do not
22 have a chance to comment, you can always provide
23 your comments at transitions.edu -- I'm sorry,
24 transitions@cps.edu, and that will be on the slide

1 presentation.

2 You can also submit written comments at
3 the registration desk and said members at the desk
4 will provide notecards for written comments, if
5 you have not yet received one. For additional
6 information, please reference the transition plan
7 regarding the school action at cps.edu/transitions
8 where you can find all of the information needed.

9 In addition meeting summaries for each
10 community meeting will be available online, okay,
11 within 5 days after each meeting, and you can
12 access it at the website.

13 So this is tonight's agenda. The
14 introduction of logistics, the school action
15 presentation, and then the public comment will
16 probably begin right at 6:20.

17 This meeting is part of a broader
18 timeline regarding the proposed actions. And
19 after these meetings and the hearing, we will
20 review all input. After this CEO Jackson will
21 make a recommendation to the board to vote on the
22 proposed action.

23 Following the potential recommendation,
24 the board will vote on whether or not to approve

1 the proposed action at the February Board of
2 Education meeting, okay.

3 All right. This is our format for
4 tonight. You'll see that we'll present a short
5 presentation. Then CPS will listen. Each
6 participant will have 2 minutes to ask questions
7 or provide public comments. Each participant will
8 receive notice when there are 30 seconds left and
9 the 2-minute mark. If you did not have the chance
10 to comment, as I said before, you can put your
11 information in at the desk outside.

12 All right. So over the past year, we
13 have engaged various communities on this proposal
14 and have had good feedback and formed adjustments
15 to the proposal. We heard from various
16 communities, as you see here. We heard from
17 Drake, Haines, Healy, NTA, South Loop, Ward;
18 community members from Armour Square, Bronzeville,
19 Bridgeport, Chinatown, and South Loop. We also
20 heard from aldermen and state representatives.

21 We have conducted three large community
22 meetings between May and June of 2017. We had
23 five meetings of the steering committee comprised
24 of community leaders across these groups, over 30

1 small group meetings with various stakeholders,
2 and received over 900 emails at the
3 cps.edu/transitions website.

4 In this engagement, we heard a lot of
5 feedback from various perspectives, including
6 those interested in high school and potential
7 boundaries, as well as others who want to maintain
8 NTA as an elementary school, including its strong
9 culture and staff.

10 We worked to adjust our proposal in
11 response to various points of feedback, including
12 expanding the South Loop boundaries to incorporate
13 all of NTA's current boundary and releasing an
14 initial draft boundary and releasing the boundary
15 for community feedback.

16 We also wanted to take time to explain
17 the proposal and where it stands today and
18 continue to gather feedback through these
19 community meetings.

20 So as we move into the proposal, you'll
21 see all the proposed changes are scheduled to
22 begin in school year 2019 and 2020. On the
23 elementary side, this proposal involves a new
24 state-of-the-art South Loop facility, three-campus

1 model at South Loop, and expanding South Loop's
2 boundary to encompass all of NTA's current
3 boundary over time.

4 On the potential high school conversion,
5 as you see on the graph, this proposal involves
6 NTA, rather than converting to a high school over
7 time, transitioning grades pre-K to 3 to South
8 Loop while allowing students in grades 4 through 8
9 to remain at NTA or to transfer to South Loop and
10 provide a guaranteed seat for all NTA students to
11 attend the high school regardless of where they
12 live.

13 In the following slides, we will go
14 through a few details of this proposal. In terms
15 of the high school conversion timeline, this
16 proposal involves the following changes for
17 2019/2020: Transition of pre-K program at NTA to
18 South Loop; enrolling incoming kindergarten
19 students at South Loop; rising students in grades
20 1 through 3 will be reassigned to South Loop or
21 have the option to transfer to another school; NTA
22 students in grades 4 through 8 to either stay at
23 NTA or transition to South Loop.

24 All NTA students will have a guaranteed

1 seat of the high school regardless of where they
2 live.

3 Starting in school year 2019/2020, NTA
4 would begin a gradual conversion to a high school
5 over time. As you can see below, NTA would
6 contain students in grades 4 through 9 in
7 2019/2020 years. In subsequent years, NTA would
8 gradually phase in high school grades while
9 phasing out the elementary school grades.

10 So by school year 2022/'23, NTA would
11 contain students in grades 7 through 12 and in
12 school year 2024 through '25 and beyond, NTA would
13 only contain the high school grades 9 through 12.

14 We will ensure that high school and
15 elementary grade transitions will be managed with
16 the appropriate safety and security
17 considerations.

18 In terms of the transition for specific
19 NTA students, starting in 2019/2020, the pre-K
20 program at NTA program will be located at South
21 Loop.

22 For students in the neighborhood program,
23 rising kindergarten students that live in the
24 current boundaries of NTA will be zoned to South

1 Loop. NTA will not offer a kindergartener option.

Rising 1st through 3rd grade students at NTA will be reassigned to South Loop regardless of where they live. They would also have the option to transfer to other elementary schools. Staff will be available from the Office of Access and Enrollment. They will help students and families if they wish to explore other options.

9 Rising 4th through 8th grade students can
10 stay at NTA through graduation or transfer to
11 South Loop's neighborhood track. They can also
12 decide to transfer to South Loop in subsequent
13 school years.

14 For students in the regional gifted
15 program, the RGC program for kindergarten through
16 3rd grade will be located at South Loop. In
17 subsequent years, the RGC program will phase in
18 grades at South Loop.

23 Also, staff from the Office of Access and
24 Enrollment will help students and families if they

1 wish to explore other options as well.

2 The RGC programs for grades 4 through 8
3 would remain at NTA and phase out over time. They
4 would also have the option to transfer in to South
5 Loop neighborhood track in 2019/’20 and in future
6 years.

7 In terms of how the elementary school
8 boundary will change, South Loop's boundary will
9 expand to include all of NTA's current boundary
10 over time. This boundary change over time is in
11 sequence with the transition of elementary school
12 students and the phaseout of elementary school
13 grades at NTA.

14 So, for example, in school year
15 2019/2020, kindergarten through 3rd grade at NTA
16 transitions to South Loop; and likewise, the
17 boundary for kindergarten through 3rd grade
18 students in NTA's current boundary will be South
19 Loop.

20 NTA will offer grades 4 through 8, so the
21 boundaries for students in grades 4 through 8's
22 NTA current boundary will still be NTA.

23 All students residing in this boundary in
24 grades 4 through 8 will also have the option to

1 attend South Loop Elementary School.

2 We recognize that this change will be
3 difficult for some families and students. We
4 engaged both NTA and South Loop parents in
5 developing this transition plan, including
6 multiple steering committee meetings.

7 Ultimately we developed a draft plan that
8 budgets 3.5 million to support that transition of
9 NTA students to South Loop and the coming together
10 of these two school communities.

11 So some of the key transitions that we
12 included were: The budget for variety and events
13 activities designed to support community building
14 and culture integration, starting the year prior
15 to any proposed actions.

16 Another one was creating of a Joint
17 Culture and Climate Team comprised of staff,
18 parents, and student representatives from both NTA
19 and South Loop.

20 Then the principal and school-based
21 transition coordinators to assist with
22 implementation of new programs and practices at
23 each school. We would also provide logistical
24 support, examples are recording transfers and the

1 like, and the other supports identified by both
2 schools' leadership.

3 Implementation of restorative practices:
4 Professional development and training
5 opportunities for all school staff and
6 transportation for transferring NTA students to
7 commute to South Loop Elementary School.

8 In addition, as part of this proposal,
9 all NTA students as of 2018/19, regardless of
10 where they live, will have a guaranteed seat at
11 the high school as they matriculate from the
12 elementary school to the high school.

13 Following months of asks from community
14 members, we wanted to release a draft boundary to
15 gather feedback on the proposal. To develop this
16 draft, we gathered input from community leaders in
17 the near south area incorporating all effective
18 stakeholders. Conversations with the near south
19 steering committee were an integral component.

20 Ultimately based on these discussions, we
21 released draft boundaries that incorporate both a
22 neighborhood as well as a preference boundary,
23 which I will explain later.

24 As you can see in the map, the proposed

1 neighborhood boundary incorporates the current
2 elementary school boundaries of the following
3 schools: Drake, Haines, Healy, NTA, South Loop,
4 and James Ward.

5 The proposed preference boundary
6 incorporates the current elementary school
7 boundaries of both Armour and Holden and Pershing.
8 The addition of the preference boundary allows us
9 to expand quality high school options and
10 opportunities for students in nearby communities
11 and help foster the diversity in the school.

12 In terms of what each boundary means for
13 parents and students, I will explain. The
14 neighborhood boundary gives students living in the
15 boundary a guaranteed seat at the school.

16 Many high school students choose to
17 attend schools other than their neighborhood
18 school. Across the district, approximately
19 22 percent of high school students attend their
20 neighborhood school. The preference boundary
21 gives preference to students living in the
22 boundary over other students in the city based on
23 the number of available seats.

24 If too few students from the preference

1 boundary want to attend, then the remaining seats
2 would go to students from the rest of the city.
3 If too many students from the preference boundary
4 would want to attend, then CPS would conduct a
5 lottery for the remaining seats.

6 We do not anticipate a lottery based on
7 current enrollment projections, which we will
8 review here on the next slide.

9 There are 2,037 high-school-age students
10 living in the boundary area, including both
11 neighborhood and preference boundaries. These
12 students would make up one of the most diverse
13 high school communities in the city with
14 27 percent of African-Americans attending,
15 19 percent Hispanic, 41 percent Asian, and 74
16 low-income students.

17 The estimated capacity of the high school
18 is between 1,000 and 1200 students, depending on
19 the final space configuration if the proposal is
20 to move forward.

21 Based upon school preference among
22 current students in the area and enrollment
23 patterns at other highly sought-after neighborhood
24 schools, projected enrollment among students

1 living in the neighborhood boundary is not
2 expected to exceed 50 percent.

3 Based on current enrollment projections,
4 this would allow students in both the neighborhood
5 and preference boundary to attend the school.

6 This projection has been based on an
7 analysis of highly sought-after schools with
8 neighborhood boundaries, such as Lincoln Park High
9 School, which draws only 46 percent of students
10 living in its boundary.

11 In addition, 60 percent of the current
12 high school students who live in the draft
13 boundary area already attend a selective
14 enrollment or a Level 1 Plus high school.

15 That's the presentation.

16 Moving into public comment, before we get
17 started with the public comment section, I wanted
18 to go over a few logistics and the guidelines for
19 a very good conducive and respectful meeting.

20 Prior to public participation, we will
21 provide an opportunity for city, state, and
22 federal elected officials to speak, which they
23 have already been invited to. I think they have
24 withheld that request just yet.

1 During the public participation, each
2 speaker that has signed up to speak will have
3 2 minutes to share their thoughts. You will get a
4 warning at the one-minute mark when there are
5 30 seconds remaining and when time is up.

6 Speakers must speak at the podium. You
7 see that microphone over here. Please do not
8 touch or grab the microphone. The sound booth is
9 controlling it from above.

10 And please remember that the purpose of
11 this meeting is to hear from those that are in
12 attendance and that there's both a stenographer,
13 who's seated right here, capturing every remark,
14 as well as the CPS notetaker sitting right here at
15 the table at this meeting.

16 In the interest of time, we will
17 generally not be responding to any questions or
18 comments at this meeting.

19 Please remember that the stenographer can
20 only capture the speaker's remarks if there's no
21 additional noise, so it's important that we
22 respect the speakers at the mic. So please keep
23 your voices down in the audience when there are
24 speakers so that she can hear to get the notes

1 recorded accordingly.

2 The meeting is scheduled to end at
3 8:00 p.m. The comment period will last until the
4 scheduled end time of the meeting. If translation
5 is required, each speaker will have their
6 full-time, and then the translator will share a
7 summary of the speakers' comments. We also have
8 sign language interpreters for anybody that may
9 need that, and she's sitting right up here in the
10 front row.

11 So you want to start your remarks with
12 your name and affiliation with the school so it
13 can be a part of the official record. And if you
14 did not have a chance to comment, again, you can
15 take a card at the back and write your comments,
16 leave it at the desk, and we will submit it to
17 cps.edu/transitions.

18 For additional information, please
19 reference the transition plan regarding the school
20 action at the same website. In addition, meeting
21 summaries for each community meeting will be
22 available online at the website within 5 days of
23 the meetings. I keep saying the website. It's
24 cps.edu/transitions.

1 In addition, a reminder that we have
2 representatives from ODLSS, temporary living
3 situations, and talent office, who will be
4 available for 30 minutes after the meeting, again,
5 to have -- answer any questions that you may have.
6 Please note that the tablets are not formally part
7 of the process, so those will be private
8 conversations between you and that person.

9 To begin the public comment section, I
10 would like to give -- I'm going to scratch that.
11 Because we have so many elected officials, they
12 always get the opportunity to say if they want to
13 speak first. I think we have vetted that right
14 now, and that's not to say they won't speak at any
15 time during the meeting. But right now, they've
16 declined to speak at the beginning.

17 We will now begin to call participants
18 who have registered to speak. So at this time,
19 Karim Pender will be navigating the microphone
20 over here. Would speakers No. 1 through 5 please
21 line up behind the podium in this aisle right
22 here.

23 We will continue to call speakers up in
24 advance to allow the most people to speak. Note,

1 you will be responsible for calling up subsequent
2 speakers, and we will keep a consistent line.
3 Speaker flow, we will continue to keep the flow
4 going as we move from 1 through 5 and then 5
5 through 10.

6 As a reminder, please start your remarks
7 with your name, your affiliation with the school
8 so they can be part of the record. Again, if you
9 go past 2 minutes, the timekeeper -- where is our
10 timekeeper? There you are -- [inaudible] from the
11 local school council will be serving as our
12 timekeeper.

13 At this point, the speaker will be asked
14 to please conclude their remarks or other similar
15 phrases that you are comfortable with. We will
16 not be disrespectful, okay, and we don't want you
17 to be either.

18 Do not allow any individual to walk away
19 with the microphone, please. And speakers please
20 speak loudly. And if I can get that request from
21 the sound, if you can raise the sound level up so
22 we can make sure that our stenographer and our
23 note keeper can hear the sound when speakers begin
24 to speak.

1 Any questions related to the transition
2 plans or any other information will be answered
3 directly at the table if you request any further
4 information. Any questions not covered, we want
5 to thank you for your comments. Again, you can
6 submit your information to the
7 cps.edu/transitions.

8 So I think you've heard enough of me, and
9 you've seen the presentation. Tonight is for you,
10 and we want to hear from all of you all. Your
11 voices, again, are important. But it's also
12 important that we're able to hear the voices.

13 We also want to be respectful of our
14 language. We do have children, wonderful children
15 from NTA, from South Loop from all of our schools.
16 At the end of the day, these proposed actions
17 affect our children, and it's all about what we
18 are doing for the children in the City of Chicago
19 and Chicago Public Schools.

20 So to further not delay, let's move to
21 speaker No. 1.

22 LA SHON BOSTON: Hello. My name is LaShon
23 Boston, and I am a 7th grade former student at
24 NTA. I've been here since 3rd grade, and these

1 last 4 years have been great. This school is a
2 wonderful school that love children that depend on
3 it. This is not okay. This great school is a
4 Plus 1 school of excellence, but we are still in
5 the decision of being built to a high school.

6 My 4 years have been fun, and I always
7 have felt safe and protected. My first little
8 brother JV won't be affected by this. My other
9 brother Josiah Boston will be affected. And I
10 would hate for him to miss out on the wonderful
11 times I had, and I would hate him not to have seen
12 that.

13 So I don't know. It's like kind of,
14 like, upset to kind of like see how -- well, I
15 kind of miss this school, even though I'll be
16 graduating. I still have like other little
17 brothers that still go to this school, and they
18 kind of like depend on this so -- and also we have
19 wonderful teachers and a wonderful principal, vice
20 principal, and everything.

21 It's a wonderful school, and I would hate
22 to see this school be closed down and ...

23 JAMES VULNER: My name is James Vulner. I'm
24 a South Loop resident. And since I was illegally

1 forced to declare my allegiance before being
2 allowed to speak, I choose to be for a high school
3 plan, just not this one. I cannot support a plan
4 based on lies, and neither should you.

5 Lies to sell this plan: No. 1, NTA is
6 not closing. NTA is an elementary school. If you
7 change it to a high school, it is different. If I
8 go to a hotdog stand today and I come back
9 tomorrow and it's a taco stand, the hotdog stand
10 is closed.

11 No. 2, the alderman and the CEO of
12 Chicago Public Schools are out there saying it is
13 a tale of two cities at NTA. Well, a tale of two
14 cities, they're saying the RGC students and the
15 neighborhood children go to different high schools
16 and don't have the same opportunity. How do you
17 know? Our RGC only goes to the 5th grade, so
18 you're out there telling lies to sell a plan that
19 makes no sense.

20 No. 3: Everyone in the boundary is going
21 to get a seat. I know we're not [inaudible] CPS,
22 but when you have 650 students per class
23 graduating and there's only 250 seats, someone is
24 going to be left out. Remember that, Chinatown.

1 Lie No. 4: The NTA students can
2 successfully be integrated into a school that
3 successfully kicked them out 10 years ago.

4 No. 5, we can convert that school for
5 \$10 million. For \$10 million, we can raise the
6 urinals from here to here and maybe convert the
7 pool. That's about it.

8 MR. POINTER: John Pointer, NTA staff, to my
9 family, to my friends, to my staff: I want you to
10 know -- will you all please stand up so you can
11 hear this. This is NTA family. This is a family
12 that has built NTA, has lived NTA, has did
13 everything in their power to take care of NTA.

14 I've been there since 2002. I have
15 opened a book in that building. And to see the
16 book closed on that building is not right. And at
17 the end, we need to stay together because we make
18 NTA what it is. It is Plus, it is Level 1, we
19 need to stay there. We need not to go anywhere,
20 but stay NTA.

21 South Loop kids, if you want to come to
22 NTA, we'll take care of you. Yes, we'll take care
23 of you. If you all want to build another South
24 Loop, you can build that for the high school.

1 That will be the high school. But NTA is NTA. No
2 other way. We cannot every change NTA. You
3 cannot take NTA from us because we live NTA.

4 I've been there to live it. I've been
5 there to see it, and I've seen it develop. I've
6 seen some of the best years come out of that
7 building. I've seen some of the finest
8 administrators come through that building. And to
9 take it away, it ain't right. It ain't right.

10 So this is what we going to do. We going
11 to stick together, and we going to fight it out
12 until you all make a decision. All kids is kids.
13 Not this kid here, not this kid here. We fight
14 together. We stay together.

15 Until the parents -- the parents fight
16 real hard. They fight. I commend them. I
17 commend them because they want special kids. Any
18 kids are always welcome to come to NTA. We will
19 never turn you away. We will take care of you.
20 If you want to know NTA, come through our doors
21 and find out. Don't use lies. Don't use
22 suggestions that you think that is right when it's
23 wrong. We right here. We all here. This is what
24 we believe in. We believe in NTA. And we going

1 to live until we die, so that's what we going to
2 do.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. PENDER: Speakers 6 through 10 can begin
5 lining up. Speakers 6 through 10.

6 BEN SHIAMA: My name is Ben Shiama. I'm the
7 parent of a South Loop student and NTA student.
8 I've got feet in both wells. And I feel like the
9 very first question that needs to be asked at
10 every one of these meetings, at every one of these
11 presentations, needs to be what are we sacrificing
12 NTA for?

13 It needs to be what we sacrificing the
14 part work of Principal Castelaz, the fantastic
15 teachers and staff at that school, Mr. Pointer --
16 who I've got to follow -- what are we sacrificing
17 all that work for?

18 And it's not lost on me that most of the
19 voices at these community meetings that expressed
20 support for a neighborhood high school option has
21 been just that: support for a neighborhood high
22 school option. It's a vision of what they see in
23 their heads, of what they want.

24 However, the voices of those who have

1 opposed this plan see it for what it is. They
2 look past what could be with that building and
3 they see what's being promised and how it doesn't
4 add up.

5 And that just seems to -- well, let's put
6 it this way: I see these new proposed boundaries,
7 and I'm even more convinced of the fact that once
8 you look at the details, there's no way you can
9 support this.

10 For the schools that are part of the
11 guaranteed boundary, you have math there. The
12 math I have from own CPS's website says that
13 that's about 500 kids per class, per grade level,
14 which is twice the size of the available boundary
15 of NTA.

16 The lottery is another 150 seats, which
17 means they're pretty much out. You add the
18 private schools, the private elementary schools,
19 Francis Xavier or British School, Old St. Mary's,
20 St. Therese, VCA, Daystars, St. Jerome, Cuffe
21 Tech, Santa Lucia, and more than I'm sure I
22 missed, that's another 350 seats.

23 What are we going to do with NTA?
24 Suddenly going to double in size? What are we

1 sacrificing NTA for? And I don't see the numbers.
2 I don't see the numbers.

3 And, finally, to my alderman, to
4 Mr. Thompson, you are the 11th Ward alderman. I'm
5 in your ward, and I ask you respectfully, why are
6 you supporting this? Looking at a map of your
7 ward, half of the map, half of your ward is out of
8 the school. Another quarter is out by virtue of
9 being in the lottery. Please tell us why are you
10 supporting something that cuts out [inaudible].

11 Thank you.

12 JESSE SHARKEY: My name is Jesse Sharkey.
13 I'm the vice president of the Chicago Teachers
14 Union. And on behalf of 25,000 teachers, PSPS,
15 and the clinicians that make the entire school of
16 the city go every day, I want to firmly state our
17 opposition to this plan to phase out and close
18 NTA.

19 The plan is ill-conceived, and it
20 undermines the academic success of a jewel of a
21 neighborhood school. CPS [inaudible] are
22 punishing those schools which struggle the most.
23 Since 2004, what CPS has done is it has used low
24 test scores in literally dozens of schools in

1 black and Latino neighborhoods across the city,
2 they've used low test schools as a club to beat
3 down the morale and then justification for closing
4 those schools.

5 It never made any sense to me, you know,
6 to close the schools that were -- performed the
7 lowest that were also in the poorest
8 neighborhoods. You know, want to stay off the
9 list? Raise your scores, they say. It never made
10 much sense. But at least we understood it. At
11 least it was rationale that if you taught in the
12 school, if you worked hard and you were involved
13 in local school council, you were a parent, at
14 least you knew how to keep your school from being
15 closed.

16 But not NTA. And CPS proposed to turn
17 this proposition that we've lived by for the last
18 15 years exactly on its head. And we're going to
19 close a high-performing school because CPS wants a
20 building for a gentrifying neighborhood, and
21 that's what it is.

22 It's bad enough that CPS closed schools
23 based on the values of tests. Now we're closing
24 schools based on the values of condominiums, and

1 we shouldn't do it.

2 And the last thing we are told is that
3 closing NTA will actually help racial integration
4 and will be a blow to racial justice in this city.
5 Bull. You cannot stand for racial justice, which
6 we must have in the city, which we must have in
7 the schools, we must have racial justice.

8 But you cannot do that by attacking a
9 successful school that manages to have students of
10 all races work together in fine academic success.
11 You don't punish your successful schools. You
12 don't do it.

13 Again, the Chicago Teachers Union firmly
14 opposes the plan to phase out and close NTA. We
15 ask CEO Janice Jackson and the rest of the Board
16 of Ed to vote no on this plan.

17 Thank you.

18 PASTOR GRANBERRY: Good evening. My name is
19 pastor Earl Granberry, and I've been in the South
20 Loop for 36 years. Change is hard. But parents I
21 want to share something with you. Don't think
22 with your emotions. Make sure you think about
23 your children. Don't you get so caught up in this
24 that you hurt your children. Don't make the

1 decision that you going to regret.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Whose children are you
3 talking about?

4 PASTOR GRANBERRY: Let me finish. You didn't
5 interrupt nobody else. Stay in your place.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Can we have a little bit more
7 sound at the mic, please? Let's be respectful and
8 allow the speakers to speak. Thank you.

9 PASTOR GRANBERRY: I know change is hard, but
10 don't think with your emotions. This is good for
11 every child. You may not see it now. If you
12 would stop thinking with your emotions and look at
13 the plan, they already put the plan up there and
14 showed it to you, but there are lies and rumors
15 out here. Don't manipulate your children. That's
16 what you're doing. You're manipulating your
17 children. This will help your children and not
18 hurt your children.

19 I'm not going to get into debate with
20 you. Just stop thinking with your emotions.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. We have the next
23 speaker. Let's respect the speaker, please.
24 Thank you.

1 We have a child at the mic.

2 JASMINE: Hello, my name is Jasmine, and I am
3 third grade student from NTA. I don't want my
4 school to be taken away. We are a 1 Plus school.
5 I learned reading, science, swimming, and math.
6 My school is a Level 1 Plus. My school, I don't
7 want us to lose it. I love the way my classmates
8 are nice. They made our school a 1 Plus school.
9 My teacher taught me a lot of things, and I don't
10 want that to go away. Please don't take away my
11 school. Please.

12 DENARDA JONES: I'm sorry. My name is
13 Denarda Jones. I'm a parent. I have two
14 daughters at NTA.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Move in closer, please.

16 DENARDA JONES: And my daughters were from a
17 displaced school. Their previous school had
18 closed, and they moved them into another school.
19 And it was not good. My daughters was not doing
20 good at all.

21 And before when I moved them to NTA, they
22 have went from being D's and F's to A's and B's.
23 So the staff is phenomenal. I have never -- I
24 have never seen a more involved principal. The

1 teachers are so -- they care about the students so
2 much that I trust them completely with my
3 children.

4 So I beg, please do not close this
5 school. This is the best school in the South
6 Loop.

7 Thank you.

8 MASUL MARTY: My name is Masul Marty. I have
9 a child at NTA as well as South Loop. National
10 Teachers Academy ignites momentum, inspiring black
11 youth to be future leaders that will create a just
12 society.

13 President Barak Obama declared that
14 education is the civil rights issue of our time,
15 and NTA is transforming the lives of generations
16 of black people. So why is CPS eliminating NTA?

17 NTA serves students that are 75 percent
18 African-American and 75 percent economically
19 disadvantaged. NTA students outperform 75 percent
20 of students across the country. In fact, 7th and
21 8th graders were greater academically than
22 90 percent of students nationwide.

23 So why is CPS eliminating NTA? CPS
24 declares there are [inaudible] more white South

1 Loop families don't send their children to
2 Phillips, the zone high school. CPS says
3 converting NTA into a high school provides South
4 Loop families a peace of mind by guaranteeing
5 access to a quality high school.

6 Translation: Phillips is not high
7 quality for more affluent or white families. So
8 why is CPS eliminating NTA? As Pastor Granberry
9 said, all kids deserve access to a high-quality
10 high school in their community. While Phillips is
11 not high quality for South Loop families, CPS has
12 made Phillips the receiving school for any
13 Englewood students currently being evicted.
14 Translation: Phillips is high quality for less
15 affluent and black families.

16 So why is CPS eliminating NTA? CPS says
17 years ago, boundaries were drawn that excluded and
18 separated low-income black children. And now that
19 NTA is transforming the lives of these same black
20 children, CPS decides they want to right the
21 historical wrong.

22 How is eliminating NTA, a vital community
23 resource and preventing generations of low-income
24 black children from attending the school that is

1 transforming and igniting future black leaders,
2 the right thing to do?

3 While Chicago aspires to be one Chicago,
4 we know the reality. Chicago is a
5 hyper-segregated city dividing the have and have
6 nots. I thought as Chicagoans embrace this unjust
7 action as a catalyst for change but need to create
8 a just society, we choose, we decide.

9 MR. PENDER: Speakers 11 through 15, line up.
10 Speakers 11 through 15. Also keep your face away
11 from the mic. Speak directly into the mic. Thank
12 you.

13 LAZARIA TENANT: My name is Lazaria Tenant,
14 and I am in 4th grade. And I am an honor roll
15 student, and I have a sister in 1st grade. And if
16 me and my sister get split up, my mom won't have
17 enough for me and my sister to get to school.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. PENDER: Once again, we can have speakers
20 11 through 15 begin to line up. Speakers 11
21 through 15.

22 DAVID WU: My name is David Wu. I'm with
23 Coalition for Better Chinese American Community.

24 Since I looked at the high school

1 boundary map yesterday, I've been named a couple
2 times racist, classless, and whether or not I'm
3 living up to religious convictions.

4 One of my friends asked me, you don't
5 have to respond to that. But I told him, I just
6 take a deep breath, try not to react, and try to
7 answer the questions factually.

8 You know, whether or not you believe that
9 CPS should not close a Level 1 Plus school or
10 whether you think that CPS should convert the
11 school into a high school that's very diverse,
12 serving a very low-income area in Bronzeville,
13 Bridgeport, you don't have to be accused of being
14 racist or classless or having your religious
15 convictions questioned. I'm glad we're not
16 hearing much of that day, but it doesn't have to
17 be that.

18 Chinatown CPS supports the high school
19 conversion and boundary as it serves a huge area
20 that has never had its own high school. You know,
21 40, 50 years, people have been going far away to
22 schools. Very few schools have responded to our
23 needs, providing, helping our kids to have good
24 bilingual programs.

1 And so having a school close by serves
2 that need. Sarah here talked to us yesterday, and
3 I totally disagreed with her introduction to the
4 piece. She said Chinatown was celebrating this.
5 And we are not celebrating this because to make a
6 diverse high school, there's kids, Hispanic,
7 Chinese, Asian American, white, from different
8 backgrounds, it's not going to be easy. But
9 Chinatown is committed to making it work.

10 Thank you.

11 AUDREY JOHNSON: Good evening. I am Audrey
12 Johnson, a parent at National Teachers Academy
13 and a former student -- a parent, a former
14 resident of the Hearl B. Homes (phonetic), born
15 and raised.

16 You all keep talking about -- you keep
17 passing there, you keep talking about we getting
18 the wrong information. Who are you? I don't even
19 know you. As a pastor, I ain't never seen you
20 come to the Hearl B. Homes and support our
21 community, nor National Teachers Academy. I have
22 a brick in the building.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you. Let's
24 address the issue.

1 AUDREY JOHNSON: Now for your school, our
2 district not only serves our kids, it serve our
3 seniors, it serve our Chinese community, it serve
4 our kids during the summertime. So what happens
5 with our children in our community? We got enough
6 killing going on. That's what happens all summer.
7 Or what happens to our seniors that don't have
8 nothing to do. They come over and swim in the
9 morning, get they self together.

10 You all going to take it away for you all
11 benefit? When those buildings was up, it was
12 cool. We support you all. You had our votes.
13 Now the buildings is down, you don't need us no
14 more. Use South Loop. But you won't use them for
15 NTA. You sure won't. And you keep putting us
16 back down, talk about misleading our kids. Our
17 kids know exactly what's going on. You know why?
18 Because they come from NTA. And we make sure that
19 they know what's going on. So all you grown
20 adults, save it. Tell your own kids.

21 MR. PENDER: Speakers 16 through 20 may line
22 up. Speakers No. 16 through 20.

23 JOY CLENDENING: Good evening, everyone.
24 I'll try that again. Good evening. I'm Joy

1 Clendening. I'm a parent of two CPS graduates and
2 two current CPS students. I'm the [inaudible] --
3 raise your hand for Illinois public education.
4 Raise your hand here tonight to stand with the
5 amazing students, parents, teachers, and staff of
6 NTA.

7 We oppose the closing of NTA, which is
8 falsely labeled a reassignment boundary change.

9 For years, CPS has used questionable
10 measures in their school action decisions, closing
11 so-called low-performing schools based on narrow
12 metrics of test scores or closing so-called
13 underutilized schools based on deeply flawed space
14 utilization formulas, which allows 36 students in
15 a classroom.

16 We've objected to those standards, and
17 the lack of a broad context used to analyze how a
18 school is doing again and again and again. But
19 schools are forced to adapt to these various
20 metrics CPS imposes on them as they are judged,
21 punished, or rewarded.

22 So now CPS has decided to toss their own
23 rules and close this high-performing
24 African-American school.

1 We've had the privilege of meeting many
2 NTA students as they've come out to boldly and
3 confidently testify, shown us all leadership,
4 critical thinking, and incredible poise.

5 So tonight, we do want to say, because we
6 know there may be parents here from Bridgeport who
7 are just hearing about this, we want to say to
8 you, do not become part of these racist hunger
9 games. There are solutions that need to be
10 considered because black students matter, and we
11 are all NTA.

12 NADIA: Hi. My name is Nadia. I have two
13 children at NTA. One is in 4th grade and one is
14 in kindergarten.

15 A quick story about my 4th grader. The
16 other day, her teacher emailed me and another
17 parent, about a conflict she had witnessed between
18 my daughter and her friend that resulted in hurt
19 feelings. The conflict itself wasn't surprising.
20 This is the age where many preteen girls go
21 through experiences similar to this.

22 What I appreciate, though, was the great
23 length that her teacher went to help repair that
24 space. She didn't just ask one girl to apologize

1 to the other, but rather she took them through an
2 exercise of reflection, listening, accountability,
3 and working together to resolve the issue so it
4 wouldn't happen again. This process of
5 restorative justice where problems are adjusted
6 head on, healing is prioritized, and justice and
7 community are at the foundation at all is why my
8 children are at National Teachers Academy, and
9 this is what they will lose if NTA is converted
10 into a high school.

11 The fact that my daughter, who isn't even
12 10 yet, is engaging in this type of learning every
13 day in her school gives me hope not only for the
14 kind of citizen that she and her peers will become
15 but for the future of this amazing city.

16 I truly believe that tomorrow's activists
17 and public servants, those who are organizing
18 rallying on the streets of Chicago and improving
19 it for its better will come from the National
20 Teachers Academy.

21 Schools like this should be highlighted,
22 replicated, and improved, not underutilized or
23 closed down.

24 Unfortunately, though, we're here today

1 because CPS has decided that it's in the best
2 interest of the near south community to dismantle
3 the great working happening at NTA and convert it
4 to a high school.

5 So tonight, I ask if NTA had been
6 majority white, would we be standing here before
7 you tonight? To dismantle a thriving community
8 school to open a neighborhood high school because
9 of the belief that there is no viable high school
10 option in the near south is actually insulting to
11 the hard work of Phillips and Dunbar and the work
12 that they have put in their schools to get them to
13 where they are today.

14 It also enables the South Loop
15 communities' unfounded racism and classism toward
16 their school options that they have. Instead, we
17 should be investing in these institutions and
18 their 4600 vacancies, rather than creating a
19 brand-new option at the expense of another
20 community.

21 So I ask you again, would we be standing
22 here today if NTA was a majority white school?

23 ELIZABETH GREER: Good evening. My name is
24 Elizabeth Greer. My 2nd grader started the year

1 at NTA with 35 students in her neighborhood
2 classroom. Our principal, Mr. Castelaz, knew that
3 number was unacceptable. And through careful
4 budgeting, he was able to fund a teacher's
5 position and open up another classroom.

6 This classroom, however, is no ordinary
7 classroom. The 2nd grade teachers pulled the
8 highest achievers and formed a comprehensive
9 gifted class. My daughter is now in a cohort with
10 20 other students. Yes, there's 21 students in
11 her class who are being taught at least one grade
12 level ahead, and they will remain a cohort until
13 they graduate from the 8th grade.

14 My black daughter looks around her room
15 and sees other black students who are just as
16 smart and high achieving as she is. She is
17 growing up in an environment where being smart and
18 black is the rule, not the exception.

19 This is what gives -- this is what NTA
20 gives to black students like my daughter, and this
21 is what CPS's racist plan wants to destroy.

22 My father was born in 1941 in the rural
23 south. When I showed him CPS's proposal, he said,
24 and I quote, this plan could have been drawn up in

1 Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1950s, line by line,
2 word by word, end quote.

3 At no time in CPS's history have they
4 planned to dismantle a Level 1 Plus school; and to
5 attack NTA in this way in 2018 is to turn back the
6 clock 60 years, thereby ruining the educational
7 future of black children who depend on and love
8 NTA.

9 MR. PENDER: Speakers 21 to 25 may line up.
10 Speakers 21 to 25.

11 AMY ROME: Hi. My name is Amy Rome. I've
12 had the privilege of working with and in NTA for
13 over a decade.

14 While I agree with so much of what's been
15 said about NTA and the lack of a feasible plan
16 here for a high school to relieve the overcrowding
17 of our high schools and the need for a great high
18 school in the community, but I really want to
19 focus on the 20 years I spent in that community.

20 I came to the community in 1994 as a
21 teacher at John C. Haines School and have watched
22 the families in this community take transition
23 after transition after transition.

24 First, the tunnel that separated John C.

1 Haines School from where now NTA is would often be
2 locked in the morning if the Chicago Police
3 Department didn't have a patrol officer to unlock
4 it. So we had kids who literally lived in the
5 Harold Ickes development who had to walk across
6 the Dan Ryan Expressway ramp to get to school in
7 the morning.

8 Watched the boundaries at South Loop
9 Elementary be changed when it was convenient
10 politically.

11 Watched families from Haines moved to
12 NTA. Only the African-American families moved to
13 NTA when NTA opened.

14 Watched South Loop overcrowd, and then
15 NTA being asked to take a transition of the
16 regional gifted program into the building.

17 Price was closed. NTA again assumed
18 another transition.

19 Throughout all these transitions that
20 really impacted black families in this community,
21 NTA still, while it opened, was in the bottom --
22 14 percent of the kids were meeting our city and
23 state standards as measured by ISTEP at that time.

24 In spite of that, it is now a Level 1

1 Plus school, and we continue to disenfranchise the
2 families that served by the community. There are
3 people in this room, both politicians and CPS
4 officials, [inaudible], Alderman Dowell, who
5 understand these transitions and understand the
6 impact on families in this community and still
7 support a plan that disenfranchises them further.
8 It's without conscious to put this plan in place.
9 It's not feasible, and it continues to disrespect
10 families.

11 RAQUEL DODD: Hi. My name is Raquel Dodd.
12 I'm a parent from James Work School, an LSD member
13 there. And I too am a very passionate and
14 dedicated parent.

15 I am proud to say I am from Bridgeport.
16 I am the fourth generation to live there. And
17 there is no public high school in Bridgeport. But
18 my pride of Bridgeport not only comes from the
19 multiple generations that my family has been
20 there, it is in the diversity of our neighborhood.
21 And I believe that we have enough students in our
22 neighborhood and the diversity to make a great
23 high school in the Bridgeport area.

24 Thank you.

1 ELI DIAZ: Hello. My name is Eli Diaz. I'm
2 a parent from an NTA student. I was asked for or
3 against the proposal. My opinion is truly
4 irrelevant. I have no friends in high places. I
5 was reminded of that when Janice Jackson said
6 Chicago is Chicago.

7 The truly profound meaning of such a
8 simple phrase, when I heard Janice say this
9 through some news interview, it focused my mind
10 again what is happening here with NTA and the
11 closing of it. Understanding what was said,
12 Chicago is Chicago.

13 It's truly very simple. In this case, it
14 would mean orders from downtown have been given.
15 Friends and family have been ordered -- awarded
16 city contracts, and all that's left is for CPS,
17 cronies or not, is to comply with state mandates
18 in regards to public hearings and state
19 guidelines.

20 Their intentions will be made whether it
21 benefits the greater constituents or not. The
22 only importance in such cases is whether the
23 political families of Chicago have received their
24 share of the spoils.

1 As an NTA parent, I don't come here to
2 complain of the illnesses that are perpetuated by
3 downtown but to remind others that our problems
4 originate with downtown, and our career aldermen
5 and career commissioners who serve with virtual
6 tenureship who truly believe that when their
7 interests are served, that Chicago's interest is
8 served.

9 If we as people don't want to find
10 ourselves spitting into the wind again, then a
11 true effort to replace our career politicians
12 needs to begin so that people can have a
13 meaningful representation, so an excellent school
14 isn't closed to line somebody's pocket.

15 TINA FELDSTEIN: My name is Tina Feldstein.
16 I am with the Prairie District Neighborhood
17 Alliance, and I am a long-time South Loop
18 resident. And I want to be very clear that we're
19 100 percent in support of this plan.

20 I also want to commend CPS as well as
21 everyone who has participated and been engaged in
22 this process for bringing up feedback that has
23 been applied. So, for example, the expanding of
24 the boundaries to include the entire NTA boundary,

1 which includes Motor Row. There's been a lot of
2 cries from people in that area that were cut out
3 from the new boundary. So the proposed boundary
4 for the elementary school is a great improvement.

5 At this point, obviously this is still
6 just a proposal. There are a lot of people that
7 have been crying and calling for a neighborhood
8 high school for many, many, many years. We know
9 Chinatown has for over 40 years. Many people from
10 the South Loop have been leaving simply because
11 there's no opportunity. It's so difficult to get
12 into a selective-enrollment high school.

13 So having a neighborhood high school
14 that's going to serve such a diversified group in
15 our community is a huge win and in the long run,
16 in the long run, we will all look back, if this
17 proposal is approved, and say that was the best
18 thing for the whole. For the whole.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: So you can sell property.
20 You have no students in either school.

21 TINA FELDSTEIN: So the question I bring up
22 and I ask, and I'm not sure, maybe the steering
23 committee has addressed that, maybe it hasn't,
24 it's still unclear as to how many -- if the

1 proposal were to move forward, how many of the
2 teachers from NTA would also transition.

3 So I was just curious as to that. I just
4 wanted to bring up a question. But other than
5 that, I applaud the process. I really appreciate
6 that everyone has an opportunity to come and
7 speak, whether people agree with what they have to
8 say or not. And I once again want to say we
9 support the plan.

10 MAE: My name is Mae. I'm a parent of a 1st
11 grade son at NTA. I wasn't really prepared, but I
12 just want to share a few things. Number one, I
13 remember when they come in to pick my son up from
14 NTA because I was about to lose my job from the
15 schedule not having an after-school, the fact they
16 took me in and took my son and told him, walked
17 him to his project program, not only did that help
18 me and my son a lot, I was able to keep my job, as
19 well as be promoted to branch manager.

20 And now being a product recently
21 graduated 2008 from CPS school under Elizabeth A.
22 Kirby as a principal, she constantly remind us the
23 value of going to a good school as opposed to a
24 school in Englewood I grew up in. She reminded me

1 personally time after time that she could easily
2 send me back to Harper or Englewood where I came
3 from.

4 So I value a good education. I have
5 friends who have kids in lower-funded schools
6 where they don't have gym, they don't have
7 [inaudible]. My son has swimming. He has
8 theater. He has drama. He goes on constant
9 trips. He had a petting zoo at his school. It
10 was good. It doesn't stop with NTA. They care
11 about their kids. They want to teach them a lot.
12 They learn.

13 I mean, they have a clinic at that school
14 so when he's sick, as a single parent, a single
15 mother, I don't have to take off. I can send him
16 to school and know that he's okay.

17 I moved from Englewood to avoid the
18 issues of him having to go to different schools,
19 schools being closed down, to the South Loop area.
20 And now here we are again. It's just sad that in
21 this day and age, and we recently within the last
22 almost 10 years or so, graduated from CPS that
23 this is what we have to go through.

24 My son asks me every time school is about

1 to start, will I be going back to NTA? What's
2 going to happen? What's going on? Why is they
3 closing my school? I really have no answers
4 except for that you want the guys want the school
5 for a Chinese high school. Why everyone just
6 can't get a plan that's equal for everybody and
7 leave NTA out of it.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Next speaker?

9 DANA METZ: Hi, everyone. I'm Dana Metz.
10 I'm a resident of the 11th Ward. I have to say
11 before this meeting, I knew very, very little
12 about NTA Elementary. It's been extremely eye
13 opening listening to all of you.

14 No doubt that NTA in its current state is
15 a great place for our students, so a genuine thank
16 you to the teachers, faculty, and thank you to the
17 supportive parents.

18 And I also believe there is a dire need
19 for a high school in the area, specifically in the
20 Bridgeport area where I live. So operating under
21 the premise that this plan does go through, what I
22 find particularly troubling is the boundaries as
23 they are laid out right now. You see, I live at
24 37th Place and Halsted, which is just two tiny

1 blocks outside of the southern boundary. And
2 right now my two daughters would be excluded from
3 attending.

4 Now, if you drive south on Halsted -- has
5 anyone gone south on Halsted, actually south of
6 35th Street? So you might, if you've driven there
7 in the past couple years, you might have noticed
8 an influx of new housing being built. In the
9 small section right there, it's about 2 to 3
10 blocks, there have been 150 new homes. 150 new
11 homes that hold as of today, 200 -- in 6 months,
12 it might be 250 kids -- so over 200 kids that are
13 currently excluded from these boundaries, and
14 we're just part of the story.

15 So I'm here today at the support of my
16 neighbors to request that the boundaries be --
17 that the boundaries be extended to include the
18 entire 11th Ward. I think that's a reasonable
19 request, and our kids deserve it. So I look
20 forward to hearing the additional comments, and I
21 truly hope that we can come to a compromise where
22 no child is left behind.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. PENDER: Speakers 26 through 28 may line

1 up. Any speakers with the numbers 26 through 28
2 may line up. Thank you.

3 MIA: Hello. My name is Mia. NTA is my
4 home, and NTA is a really good school and it is
5 really nice. It is for all kids in the whole
6 world, and it is for the core [inaudible] so we
7 need to keep NTA open. And some teachers will
8 lose their jobs if we do not keep NTA open. My
9 classmates are really nice. If NTA closes, I
10 might never see them again. NTA is one of the
11 best schools in the world. So please, CPS, don't
12 turn NTA into a high school.

13 SALEROZA SELA: Can you hear me? My name is
14 Salerosa Sela. I am Mia's father. She is a
15 student in the 2nd grade at NTA. I will not
16 repeat what everybody else has said, but I'll tell
17 you some facts that I have seen.

18 It's a Level 1 Plus school. We have a
19 community. We have quality. We have sports. We
20 have amazing facilities. We have Girl Scouts. It
21 exists. It is real. It is palpable. We have
22 black, Latinos, Asians, and whites living in
23 harmony. We are here to stay. And we deserve
24 more.

1 We deserve NTA, and we deserve a high
2 school. We live in Bridgeport, so we have that
3 concern as well, right. We want a high school
4 that when Mia finishes at NTA, she can go to. One
5 of the things that I have learned from this
6 process is if there's one thing that it has done
7 to NTA is galvanize us. It has turned us into a
8 true community. I have made a lot of friends, a
9 lot of parents, blacks, whites, all kinds of
10 different religions. It has been the only
11 positive thing about this process. This is the
12 jewel of the south side. It is something that CPS
13 is doing right. CPS is doing this right. This is
14 a CPS school. So let's keep it open.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. JOHNSON: We have speakers 21 through 25.
17 Anybody have 26 through 30? Speakers 26 through
18 30? Let's go to 35.

19 MR. PENDER: 28 is it.

20 DAIQUIRI LUERS: Hello. Can you hear me? My
21 name is Daiquiri Luers. I'm a long-term resident
22 of the South Loop. I wasn't going to get up and
23 say anything because I haven't really prepared.
24 It's very emotional to sit here and see these

1 kids, see these babies fight for their school.

2 I've lived in the South Loop since I was
3 single. Well, since a long time ago. And I now
4 have a nine-year-old. I chose to send my child do
5 NTA. It's a very special place. I lived in the
6 South Loop. I know what the attitudes were. I
7 know that people saw that brand-new facility over
8 there and didn't know what was going on over there
9 and thought they were entitled to it.

10 Then I came to visit and saw what was
11 going on. I saw our brown babies who did not have
12 as much as my child has who was not as affluent
13 and getting a wonderful education, and besides
14 that, a wonderful family. A beautiful place for
15 our kids to learn and to thrive.

16 So now I ask you, it is now a Level 1
17 Plus school. Why was it okay, why is it okay to
18 sacrifice it? Why is NTA expendable? Because
19 South Loop was not expandable. Those people
20 wanted -- and I live in that neighborhood. A lot
21 of people wanted a new facility. They're getting
22 a new facility. We had a new facility. We could
23 have accommodated more kids at NTA, but they chose
24 not to make that decision.

1 Yes, I would love to have a brand-new
2 spanking new high school for my daughter Peyton to
3 go to. I would love that. Everybody in Chicago
4 wants that, but -- thank you. 30 seconds. But
5 everybody can't have that. I would love that. I
6 think there's another solution on the horizon.

7 I go to church right across the street
8 from Phillips. I see that there are wonderful
9 things going on there. It may not be attractive
10 to us now, but that investment that you're placing
11 in trying to displace NTA could be used to make
12 Phillips a school that would be attractive for
13 many to come to and encourage those who are afraid
14 to go to to come.

15 SABRINA PERKINS: Good afternoon, everybody.
16 Good afternoon. My name is Sabrina Perkins. I am
17 a grandmother at National Teachers Academy with
18 five granddaughters.

19 Closing NTA and trying to make a high
20 school, I disagree with that. The staff at NTA
21 has been excellent. I have been there from
22 volunteer, even the teachers past they time to be
23 there, like 6:00 o'clock. I know you off before
24 that, right. Working diligently hard from what

1 I've been seeing volunteering.

2 When I see the teachers, they're working
3 with the children, with the band. You've got the
4 swimming team, basketball, baseball, football,
5 soccer, and of course the different level for the
6 children, working with them. And they grades was
7 not good when they came there, but they pulled
8 them up and working with the staff at National
9 Teachers Academy.

10 And also I wasn't prepared to speak
11 either. I wasn't going to speak, but I said let
12 me come down and say what's on my mind because I
13 think it's unfair to the children. And they say
14 National Teachers Academy. True, national
15 supposed to be for all the children, T for all the
16 great teachers that's teaching there and all
17 around the school, and Academy, which you will
18 always be from what I know them.

19 Thank you. Have a good night.

20 KAYLA PERKINS: Hi. My name is Kayla
21 Perkins. I am in 7th grade, and I am a proud
22 student of National Teachers Academy. I have
23 attended NTA since I was in kindergarten.

24 I feel this proposal is unacceptable and

1 should not be continued. CPS is trying to
2 dismantle a community that has been around for
3 long time, and now we're NTA family. CPS needs to
4 be building up schools, not tearing them down.
5 Black students lives' and their education matter,
6 but they obviously can't see that. NTA needs to
7 remain a Level 1 Plus elementary school and
8 nothing less. NTA is here to stay.

9 TAYLOR WALLACE: Hi. My name is Taylor
10 Wallace. I am in the 8th grade going to National
11 Teachers Academy.

12 I shouldn't have to come here and fight
13 for my school. Other students and staff shouldn't
14 have to come here and fight for our school. I've
15 been to plenty of meetings, and I'm not going to
16 stop coming. Our message obviously haven't been
17 to your brains. We're fighting and not stop
18 fighting.

19 I've been at NTA since 1st grade and this
20 is my last year, but I could never imagine NTA to
21 be closed. This transition plan isn't just, and
22 you know it is. This isn't racist, and you should
23 own up to it and stop it. This will be my last
24 year. This won't be my last -- this won't be the

1 last you've seen of me and my school. As a matter
2 of fact, this is just a start.

3 The proposal to close NTA won't affect my
4 education, but it will affect me emotionally. It
5 will affect the little kids. Why can't they get
6 the same education as me in the same community?

7 Do you think we're stupid enough to
8 believe this plan is for the better? You say you
9 listen. You say you listen to what we have to
10 say, but do you really? Will you just say what I
11 say goes? My peers do not want a seat at South
12 Loop. Again, my peers do not want a seat South
13 Loop. South Loop isn't NTA, and it will never be
14 NTA. We will keep our seats at NTA. Why don't
15 you let us?

16 You should want to set a meaningful
17 example, not one that says "I have power and you
18 don't." We're not stupid, and I am very, very far
19 from stupid and so are my peers. We will not sit
20 here and watch you take NTA. We will fight, and I
21 can promise you we will fight.

22 JOANNIE LAPALIA: My name is Joannie Lapalia,
23 and I too live in the 11th Ward. I too are on
24 37th Street, just two blocks away from the

1 boundary.

2 My concern is, again, as another resident
3 said, we have no high school. NTA family,
4 parents, South Loop, Holding, Graham, none of us
5 have a high school. Wendell Phillips is a Level 2
6 academic probation. Tilden is the same. We have
7 no high school.

8 And while I understand you're fighting
9 for your community and your school, and I get
10 that, I have three children in CPS, a fourth one
11 going in next year, but I have no high school.
12 That leaves us in a position to either leave our
13 homes and move out of the city or pay for Catholic
14 education. The taxes you are paying shouldn't
15 require you or force you to pay for Catholic
16 education.

17 I don't know if this decision is right or
18 not to merge the two schools. South Loop is an
19 excellent school. NTA is an excellent school. I
20 really don't know the ramifications of it. But
21 what I do know is none of us have a high school.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Phillips. Dunbar.

23 JOANNIE LAPALIA: Level 2 academic probation.
24 You wouldn't send your kids to that school, and

1 neither would I.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Excuse me. Excuse me. She's
3 speaking.

4 JOANNIE LAPALIA: With these boundaries, you
5 have left out half of Bridgeport and all of
6 Canaryville, who also do not have a high school.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Let me say this before the next
9 speaker comes, please. Let me just say this.
10 Every time somebody speaks, there's respect for
11 them. If there's an opposition, then we want to
12 shout them down. We need to hear those voices too
13 out of respect for it. We don't always have to
14 agree, but at least have respect. They have
15 concerns. They are residents of this community,
16 and they may be different from yours. But they
17 have a right to express them, and we have a right
18 to listen to them respectfully. So can we please
19 encourage each other to do that.

20 Next speaker.

21 SPEAKER: I'm sitting here listening and
22 listening to the young lady who just said
23 something about, I shouldn't have to come here to
24 fight for her school. And I have been coming to

1 every single hearing up until this point, and a
2 lot of thought come into my mind. I really don't
3 know where to start. But I think she gave the
4 best version "I shouldn't have to fight for that
5 school" because when we hear all the story, I can
6 tell you that I'm deeply impressed with the
7 advocacy of the NTA family.

8 You have put up a really good case. But
9 Chinatown have not been able to tell story
10 effectively because we never had a school. And
11 maybe people don't even realize that. We had this
12 neighborhood for over 100 years, and I personally
13 have been listening to all the stories for 50
14 years in this area.

15 And it's sadden me that we all try to
16 solve problem that affect all of us, and none of
17 us really have solve the problem for everybody.
18 And it's turned into this racial issue about don't
19 trust CPS, don't trust this, don't trust that.
20 When we all take the action of, okay, we are not
21 Chinatown, we have a meeting where people shedding
22 tear about the NTA kids' experience. We look at
23 all the situation.

24 We ask CPS would you listen to the NTA

1 people. You have to come up to an answer why this
2 has to be a solution. The other thing, I also
3 listen to my community. We never had a school for
4 over hundred years. So what does that leave us?

5 And what if it turn into a situation
6 where one coming against another. This is not
7 what we want to. People talk about the race
8 issue. I deal with that. I know about the tunnel
9 issue between Chinatown and the African-American
10 community. But 20-some years ago, I invited some
11 black leaders to come with me to Chinatown leader.
12 I personally in the '90s have gone over to meeting
13 with them to make it let's deal with the crime
14 issue, not race issue, and try to solve.

15 But we have our story to tell. Maybe we
16 have not been able to tell that story effectively,
17 but we have been waiting for long time too. But
18 what is the proper solution? What is the best
19 solution? We don't know. Let's not try to turn
20 each other. Let's try to turn each other more
21 listening.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. We have about 37
23 minutes left, and we still have room for speakers.
24 If you have spoken already, you can register again

1 to speak again and approach the microphone. If
2 you have not and you do have a card, just bring it
3 up and we will hear your comments at this time.

4 WENDY MILLER: My name is Wendy Miller.

5 MR. JOHNSON: The microphone is off. We have
6 to wait on the sound lady one minute to turn the
7 mic on.

8 WENDY MILLER: My name is Wendy Miller. I'm
9 a parent of two lovely twins at NTA. NTA is
10 special in a way that should be a beacon for CPS
11 for families that need a better opportunity. My
12 daughters are loved and are safe. They have
13 opportunity to get to know people from different
14 cultures, races, and learn from these wonderful
15 people.

16 They are taken care of in a way that is
17 more personal than just staff doing their job, and
18 that is because NTA is a family, not just a
19 school.

20 If you support CPS's proposal, you are
21 complicit in the effort to ruin the education of
22 continuity of over 700 elementary school children.
23 You need to admit that to yourself and to your
24 neighbors in this room who attend NTA. Admit that

1 you expect NTA families to sacrifice their school
2 for your benefit, and admit that you feel your
3 community's needs are more important than the
4 needs of the NTA community.

5 To the steering committee, I know there's
6 a couple of you here, you cannot just go to
7 meetings and make a list in order to add NTA
8 culture to a school that doesn't place the same
9 value on all children. You cannot add family
10 culture to a school whose leadership does not
11 treat all families with respect. I had a daughter
12 go there.

13 If you are happy at South Loop, that's
14 fine, but do not assume you can sell South Loop
15 values to families who something brighter on the
16 south side of Cermak. NTA takes care of all its
17 families. All children are valued equally and
18 respected. Students are empowered to speak with
19 their own strong, confident voice. NTA ignites
20 momentum. They're building future leaders that
21 are culturally aware and strive for just society.

22 Our students are courageous and lead with
23 integrity. They stand up for what is right and
24 speak against what is wrong. Our older students

1 set an excellent example for our young students,
2 speaking up for their beliefs, standing up for
3 what is right.

4 Is this proposal wrought in the Chicago
5 way the best we can do for our future? Is
6 anything that is the Chicago way in the best
7 interest and the future of our students? I think
8 not.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Next speaker.

10 SPEAKER: I didn't really prepare anything to
11 deliver at this meeting because I sit here at this
12 meeting just like I've gone to so many board
13 meetings and so many other townhall meetings, and
14 I think myself asking the same question of why are
15 we here?

16 As you can see, there are very few
17 people, even people are looking for a high school,
18 who are strongly in support of this plan. It's
19 obvious that the majority of the community and
20 people who live within the boundaries of NTA
21 oppose this plan. We've gone to countless
22 meetings and talked about it. If you look at the
23 numbers of who support and who's opposed, it's
24 clear in majority of the lives in terms of who

1 will be affected. But that obviously doesn't
2 matter. I'm honestly wondering, why are we even
3 here for this show?

4 I think what is most important to me is I
5 wonder when CPS releases this process of the
6 school transition or whatever it's called, what
7 weight or consideration is given to how a
8 proposal, even if it originates within a
9 community, or opposing, lack of better term,
10 community, what consideration is given to that how
11 proposal will affect most of these communities.

12 [Inaudible] for CPS in the past, there's
13 evidence that it has a negative affect on GPA.
14 GPAs decrease by about 10 percent. Decrease in
15 attendance, decrease in attendance in college and
16 high school. And again, you have the most
17 vulnerable population, predominantly low income,
18 predominantly African-American. I'm wondering
19 where does that come into consideration in the
20 proposal or in the way the CPS makes decisions
21 period.

22 I think the other question that I have is
23 if this proposal is really education and rooted in
24 good thought, et cetera, et cetera, Janice Jackson

1 was quoted the other day saying on the radio if
2 you look at the gifted students and the non-gifted
3 students, they don't get into the same schools.
4 In other words, they don't get to the same high
5 schools. Not one gifted student has even
6 graduated from NTA yet. As we said before, it
7 only goes up to 8th grade.

8 So why lie? Why create the story? She
9 also said at the board meeting that the
10 achievement of NTA is due to the achievements of
11 the gifted students. We have proven and have time
12 and time again and told Alderman Dowell that the
13 achievement from NTA is actually from the
14 non-gifted students in the school, but you all
15 keep perpetuating this story.

16 And what's more concerning to me is what
17 are you saying to the students? And what about
18 the immeasurable affects of these, GPA,
19 attendance, and so forth, the humiliation, the
20 disempowerment, the devaluing their achievement.
21 No one ever comes back and says, no, we were
22 wrong. It actually is your achievements. I know
23 you're saying time, but I'm sorry. You can drag
24 me from the mic. But what about the immeasurable

1 effects? If we don't get the answers to this,
2 when do we get the answers? That's all I want to
3 know.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Next speaker.

5 CHRIS HACKER: My name Chris Hacker. I'm a
6 parent to a 2nd grade student at NTA. Happens to
7 be in the RGC, but I'm not here about the RGC
8 specifically.

9 Last speaker, I forget your name, but you
10 just asked at the beginning, why are we here?
11 Especially when it doesn't appear that we're being
12 listened to. I'm here to bear witness. We see.
13 We're watching. We're going to bring attention to
14 this. We've been bringing attention to this.

15 I'm an engineer by training. I've run a
16 software company. I'm an attorney. The numbers
17 on this thing just don't make sense. You said
18 that the current population, the current
19 population of high school students in the area,
20 2,000, and that nicely makes sense. And when I
21 heard that, I said, oh, that's interesting, okay.
22 That's the first time I heard those figures.

23 Then we hear the other figures that
24 there's roughly 500 students per grade coming up

1 in the boundary. If that's accurate, you know,
2 then half of those students who would be entitled
3 to a seat won't be able to get one. Now, that's
4 half of each grade. Right? So the math doesn't
5 work.

6 I don't understand, you know, the
7 approach. I don't understand -- again this last
8 speaker said and others have said -- the lies, the
9 misstatements. And clearly the fix is in and has
10 been. This is a political decision. It's not an
11 educational decision. And again, we're watching.
12 You know, I'm a proud Chicagoan. I am not proud
13 about this.

14 BETHANN AMSTELL: My name is Bethann Amstell.
15 I have given multiple speeches at these meetings
16 before. I've tried to argue with facts. I'm a
17 pediatrician. I try to talk about all our kids
18 who are African-American do better than the kids
19 at South Loop. I've tried to argue with lots of
20 other facts, but no one listens.

21 So let me tell you some things that I
22 want to be on record. I have spent the last 6
23 months calling the entire phone list of NTA. Do
24 you know I have not gotten one parent who supports

1 this. Not one. I have gone knocking door to door
2 at Long Grove Homes. Do you know that I did not
3 get one parent that supports this. I want this on
4 record.

5 CPS, why aren't you knocking on doors?
6 Why aren't you going to [inaudible] homes, Long
7 Grove Homes. Alderman Dowell, this is your ward.
8 Why aren't you knocking on doors? Our community
9 does not want this. [Inaudible] community, people
10 do not support this. I know this by calling,
11 knocking on doors. I've gone to City Hall. I've
12 taken the kids.

13 Stop demeaning our kids. Our kids know
14 what this proposal means. Don't tell them that
15 they don't know. They know if they're in 7th
16 grade, they could go to this high school. They
17 know this is unjust. This is not an equitable
18 plan.

19 When I knock on these doors, when I talk
20 to these families, this is what they're telling
21 me: You know what? We got kicked out of South
22 Loop 10, 13 years ago. I don't know how many it
23 was. And nobody gave a crap. So why do we show
24 up at these meetings? What's the point of it?

1 That's how they feel.

2 So it's not we're a small group of
3 people. We are not a small group of people that
4 oppose this. People are tired of coming and
5 giving their testimony and have it not count.

6 But I want it on record that all the
7 people I call and all the people I talk to don't
8 support this. I've also want it on record that
9 I've been videotaping these, and they're going to
10 be on nrc.com.

11 And I want you to see these stories, and
12 I want to leave you with one last story about the
13 woman who didn't get to come and give her
14 testimony. Her name is Ms. Peaches. She goes by
15 that. And you'll see her videos out soon. And
16 she has lived in Long Grove Homes for 20 years.
17 And she takes the kids to school back and forth
18 every day.

19 And she says not a single family there
20 supports this proposal. And you can see her video
21 coming up because my time is up.

22 One last thing, 37th, I know Bridgeport.
23 37th and south, those are \$500,000 homes. This is
24 much different than Long Grove where you go to

1 that house and a parent that's a family that has
2 three kids and one guardian that's supposed to
3 take them from building to building with three
4 schools. That's not the same thing.

5 ERICA: Hello. Can you hear me? Hello. My
6 name is Erica [inaudible]. I'm with Parents For
7 Teachers. We are 100 percent behind the families,
8 students, teachers, staff, at NTA. We think what
9 CPS is doing here is just wrong.

10 I know former CPS parents. I have two
11 kids who graduated from CPS. I can tell you CPS
12 would never have attempted to do something like
13 this to the schools that my children went to. And
14 I think we -- I would just like some honestly. If
15 it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's
16 a duck.

17 This is a racist school closing. No
18 different than what they're trying to do in
19 Englewood. They're trying to dress it up. No
20 different than what they did in 2013. Again,
21 they're trying to dress it up. But it is the
22 exact same situation where low-income black
23 families are being shoved aside for bigger
24 interests.

1 And there's no reason to expect that the
2 affects and the consequences will be any different
3 than in 2013. Ask any family that went through
4 that transition and had their kids go to one of
5 those receiving schools, they are uniformly
6 unhappy. That was a disaster, and this transition
7 plan, sending the NTA kids over to South Loop, is
8 going to be a disaster too.

9 And not only for the NTA families but for
10 the families at South Loop, this will not work.
11 The school is more than a building. It's a
12 community. It's a culture. These are real
13 people, real people's lives that you're messing
14 with.

15 And it just makes me wonder, you know,
16 the one difference between 2013 and today is that
17 NTA has met up the benchmarks. They're playing by
18 all the rules, and they still are being sabotaged.
19 It just makes me wonder, what do low-income black
20 families in the city have to do to get justice?
21 What do you have to do to get change? They're
22 playing by all of the rules, and you're still
23 trying to destroy them.

24 So we're behind you. We can do whatever

1 we can, 100 percent to support you. And I really
2 urge the people who are in favor of this plan, you
3 cannot obtain a benefit for your family and your
4 children at the expense of someone else's
5 children. A harm to one children -- a harm to one
6 child is a harm to all children, and we have to
7 stop these hunger games and come together and
8 demand what's right for all students and all
9 families, black, white, Asian, in Bridgeport, at
10 NTA, at Englewood. This has to stop.

11 SHANTELL BOSTON: Hello. My name is Shantell
12 Boston, and I'm a parent of three children who
13 attend NTA currently.

14 NTA has not only been a great school for
15 my kids to attend and receive a great education,
16 but NTA has been a great support system to help
17 single mothers like myself to keep pushing and
18 have hope and faith in my kids when I have felt
19 like giving up.

20 The staff at NTA has been like family to
21 me, and I would hate to see such a great school
22 close. My question of the night is why. This
23 proposal in question is a benefit to who?

24 Well, it's a huge disadvantage and a huge

1 inconvenience to my family and I, seeing I am a
2 single mother and I have three children who attend
3 NTA. Why would you take something so great and
4 tear it apart? Not only has the staff at NTA
5 worked so hard to get to where they are now, being
6 a Level 1 Plus school, but most importantly the
7 students. And this is their reward for all their
8 hard work and effort? It's not right at all.

9 What is this teaching our children? That
10 no matter how hard they push to become great,
11 someone will always be there to push you back
12 down. Well, this is exactly what this proposal is
13 teaching our kids.

14 To the kids and staff of NTA, I speak for
15 myself -- and I'm sure I speak for the rest of our
16 parents -- we are here to teach our generation,
17 never back down without fighting for what you
18 believe.

19 Thank you.

20 SUDA MANSOUR: Hi. This is Suda Mansour. I
21 am proud parent of my son at NTA. This is my
22 first time speaking in this meeting. I have
23 always sat in the back silently because I'm an
24 immigrant to this country 11 years ago.

1 I haven't gone to school in this country.
2 But seeing all of this is really, really
3 interesting to me. Just seeing -- I was forced
4 when I was 9 years old to go out of my school
5 because of a war in my country. I'm from a
6 country that most of you can't even pronounce
7 correct.

8 So seeing this that CPS has created feels
9 the same. These neighborhoods that are all
10 fighting for a high school or elementary is the
11 same scene as war without a bomb, without an
12 atomic bomb. So it's the same thing. We're just
13 making people fight over things that is
14 unnecessarily.

15 NTA, Mr. Castelaz and his fantastic team
16 is already great example of making the school a
17 great school. Why can't we do the same thing for
18 the two high schools that are already there and
19 spend the money that turn NTA into schools, this
20 is a real example. We're not talking about
21 assumptions. It's fact. It's right there.
22 Everyone can go and visit it every day. They're
23 doing a great, fantastic job. I don't have a
24 family in Chicago, but this community is my

1 family. So you're destroying that family.

2 CLYDE HUBERT: How are you doing? My name is
3 Clyde Hubert. I have two sons at NTA, one in
4 kindergarten and one in 1st grade. And I also
5 have a brother that graduated from NTA. His name
6 is Malcolm Green. Now, he's on his way to
7 Harvard. Harvard.

8 You're talking about NTA as being that
9 foundation. That was his foundation. Now he's
10 building his house. He did go to a
11 selective-enrollment high school, but he went to
12 NTA first. So NTA laid that foundation, now he's
13 building his house, and going to Harvard and
14 putting a roof on his house.

15 So without NTA as that foundation, he
16 wouldn't be able to do that. And I have two
17 younger sons and nephews that want to follow in
18 his footsteps and do those same exact things. If
19 [inaudible] kindergarten and 1st grade, they won't
20 be able to succeed. They're not going to
21 accomplish the same thing he accomplished. No,
22 they will, they're going to work hard, but they
23 want to see the same teachers he had, do the same
24 things he did in the same place. They don't want

1 to do it differently.

2 I could send my kids anywhere in the city
3 to go to school. We chose NTA. It's a family and
4 something we love. So let's keep this school open
5 for everybody else.

6 LATASHA WATKINS: Hi. My name is Latasha
7 Watkins. I have a child at NTA. Hopefully will
8 have two more there in the coming years.

9 I am tired. I am so tired of this
10 process. As a resident of Chicago, who pays my
11 fair share of taxes too, I'm tired of fighting for
12 my child to be in a school that is a good school
13 and that he deserves to be in and the school that
14 I chose.

15 I don't want my child at South Loop. It
16 is not the environment that I wanted, which is why
17 I chose NTA, which is performing well. And you
18 wonder why, Chip, we're boisterous and upset and
19 responding because we're tired. Every time we
20 come here, we express how we feel. We have
21 brought you facts. We have brought you
22 information on the negative outcomes of the
23 students. We have talked about in general how
24 white students get more than black students. We

1 brought everything we could bring, and it still
2 feels like you're not listening to us.

3 It still feels like this plan, we're
4 going to push this plan no matter what the
5 community said. We'll hold our three meetings to
6 make sure we check that box. But I'm tired, and I
7 know the other parents are tired. And I
8 understand the parents from Long Grove and
9 Hillards don't show up. This has been just going
10 on since what, March for me and I'm as tired as I
11 am.

12 So CPS, I need to ask you, where are the
13 facts that you need to bring to us. If you are
14 proposing to make a change to a school, I believe
15 that your motto should be first do no harm to
16 those students. Where is the data that says that
17 this is going to result in better goals.

18 Integration is not the goal. Integration
19 is not the outcome. Where is the academic
20 evidence based upon studies and information that
21 should already exist about how these students are
22 going to fair better. And if they are not, then
23 why are we following this plan and why are we
24 pushing it?

1 Alderman Dowell, I would expect your
2 support to make sure that these students are well
3 taken care of. I heard you on time. But one
4 thing I want to make sure everybody else here
5 knows, we're all here talking about this because
6 nobody, nobody is getting what they want with this
7 plan. You're not getting a high school to
8 accommodate enough students, and then we're taking
9 one from other students. Nobody is getting what
10 they want. We deserve that, and we deserve much
11 better. So push for that.

12 NAKETA BRAR: I'm a little shorter. My name
13 Naketa Brar. I am the executive director of
14 Chicago United For Equity. I'm excited to be here
15 today to hear all your voices.

16 And there are two central questions that
17 we have been raising in our racial equity
18 assessment. First of all, a racial equity
19 assessment is let's take a look at the plan.
20 Let's ask ourselves two questions: Who gets the
21 benefit? Who bears the burden?

22 And if the burdens are borne by the same
23 people that have borne burdens by Chicago's
24 planning in the past, the same families who have

1 been burdened in the past, the same racial groups,
2 black and Latino families predominantly in Chicago
3 who have borne the burdens of racist policies,
4 then we have to say to ourselves, that's not
5 right.

6 Now, I hear that there are families here
7 who have come forward who didn't know about this
8 plan before today, and they're just interested in
9 a high school. And I would say to you it's okay
10 for you to have intention for something good for
11 your child. Everybody has that.

12 But what I would say to you also is now
13 that you know it does something where it puts a
14 burden on black families in Chicago, low-income
15 black families in Chicago, you have to ask
16 yourself a question: Does your intention to have
17 something for your child come before your
18 intention to be antiracist?

19 Antiracist is different than not being a
20 racist. Not being a racist means I am not going
21 to actively do something against black people,
22 Latino people, people of different races. Being
23 antiracist means that when I see something that's
24 going on that is disproportionately burdening

1 people of color, that I'm going to stand up and
2 I'm going to speak loud and I'm going to speak the
3 truth.

4 And the truth of this situation is that
5 we've brought in people from all across the City
6 of Chicago who have no interest in this matter, 76
7 fellows who we trained in this methodology.
8 Alderman Dowell, they're some of the folks that
9 you work with in academic institutions all over
10 the city, who are people that CPS and done some of
11 their consulting work in the past. These are
12 people that have come forward with no
13 self-interest, and they have found this plan is
14 racially unjust.

15 And so what I invite you to do now is
16 join us at the very last meeting of that racial
17 equity assessment. It is Thursday, this Thursday,
18 2 days from now, 5:30 at National Teachers
19 Academy, 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. And the point of that
20 meeting is to say, look, we all want something out
21 of this plan. This plan is not serving people
22 equitably, so how do we fix it? We know the
23 collective intelligence in this room can come up
24 with something better. Chinatown, Bridgeport,

1 NTA, South Loop, you can all come forward and
2 devise something that works better for all of us.

3 PAUL KENT: Hello. My name is Paul Kent.
4 I'm representing Rush University Medical Center.
5 I am not an interested party, so I cannot be
6 looked at as someone self-serving.

7 We, me and my partner, Dr. Ansell,
8 studied health equity and social justice. I asked
9 my medical students who I teach, what do you think
10 the biggest risk to your health is in America?
11 Most of them say diabetes, smoking, family
12 history, things like that. It's not even close.

13 What do you think the biggest risk to
14 your health in America is? Poverty. Poverty and
15 education.

16 Now, I have had many foster children
17 through the years, three of which I have adopted,
18 who have struggled, had been exposed to drugs. I
19 have a child who's HIV positive. All of them are
20 doing great now. Why do you think they're doing
21 great now? Because I'm white, and they go to good
22 schools. That's why. They have had opportunity
23 that these children do not have.

24 I also recruit for Harvard. My kids have

1 that chance. Not because of their background, but
2 because of the opportunity simply because of where
3 I live in River Forest. These people, this
4 school, these kids have those opportunities, and
5 that's being taken away. There should be shame in
6 the room in the people who are doing this. I
7 heard about this just yesterday. And I want you
8 to know that people who study social justice and
9 health equity, scientists such as myself, I have
10 degrees in mathematics from Harvard, we're going
11 to look at your data. I have no doubt what we're
12 going to see is this is direct institutional
13 racist directly.

14 Thank you.

15 SPEAKER: It's me. I'm back again. I just
16 wanted to get one thing on the record that has not
17 been said yet, and I think it's important to say.
18 I know that no one from the South Loop community
19 has come up and spoken. I'm sure there are people
20 there in the audience thinking that school is
21 going to be fine, my school is going to be fine.

22 No, it's not going to be fine. What has
23 not been put up, which we cannot forget, is that
24 in conjunction with this plan of destroying NTA,

1 we're also talking about destroying South Loop
2 Elementary. How are we destroying it? We are
3 destroying it by turning it into a Franken school.
4 We are talking about taking three buildings, 1212
5 South Plymouth, the new building at 16th and
6 Dearborn, and the preschool annex on Archer and
7 Clark, and calling all of that South Loop
8 Elementary.

9 There will be almost 2,000 students
10 spread out among three buildings that stretch all
11 the way from 12th to 16th to a little bit west on
12 Archer and Cermak. I want you to think about that
13 for a moment. Many of you, like I, have more than
14 one child. We made all of these schools have the
15 exact same start time. Have you seen the traffic
16 around 1212 South Plymouth alone? Have you ever
17 tried to go to Mariano's or drop a kid off at
18 Daystar at any time of the day? It is a
19 nightmare.

20 And what we are now talking about is
21 trying to get 2,000 children into three buildings
22 and give them a great education with one
23 administration. There is no data that supports
24 this being a quality option.

1 Smaller schools are better. Contiguous
2 schools where all children from K through 8th
3 grade in the same building learn from each other.
4 This is what makes a great school. And I
5 guarantee you that if this horrible plan comes
6 through, comes to life, and all of us at NTA are
7 forced to join this Franken school, that Level 1
8 Plus rating is gone.

9 So I just want you to think about this.
10 Even if you're for NTA as a high school but what
11 you are now for is for your Franken school to drop
12 in its rating and for your children to lose out on
13 their education.

14 SPEAKER: Chip, thank you for offering for us
15 to get another card. I took you up on that.

16 I think that I just -- I just also wanted
17 to go on record with the question of where this
18 plan originated. Because with the guidelines that
19 were issued with CPS for school actions, it said
20 community members can request a school action be
21 made.

22 But what has never been made clear for
23 this particular plan is where this originated
24 from. As far as NTA families can tell, the only

1 record of where this plan was originated was the
2 email that we did see from Alderman Pat Dowell
3 that talked about a meeting with Mayor Rahm
4 Emanuel, a meeting with Tina from Prairie District
5 Alliance.

6 And let's just be clear. None of those
7 people on that email are community members of
8 either of the schools. And it is important, I
9 know we talked about being respectful to Tina when
10 she was up here, and I hate to name names, but
11 when you are a real estate agent who stands to
12 gain from this and you have nothing to lose, of
13 course you're going to stand here in support of
14 it. And that's not where the community initiative
15 should come from. That's called a conflict of
16 interest, just so we're clear.

17 And I want to go on record asking CPS,
18 where did this plan originate from? If this is
19 your requirement for a school action, where are
20 you documenting where this plan originated from
21 and you can show all of us. Since we've been
22 called conspiracy theorists, this is the thing,
23 I've been called a conspiracy theorist by Frank
24 Clark or whatever.

1 Also, on the PD&A website, again the same
2 organization that Tina represents, I once saw a
3 comment that said with NTA being 80 percent low
4 income, is it any wonder why we don't send our
5 children there. So if you think about that for a
6 second, if anybody needs a screen shot, I have it.
7 With 80 percent low income, that's the reason
8 they're not sending their children there, and
9 that's the impetus for this plan.

10 And if you're standing with this plan,
11 know that you are standing with that mindset. And
12 I just also want to mention through this process,
13 NTA, the story of NTA, the sad story of what has
14 been going on in this community for so many years
15 has already been written up in two books, and I
16 talked to a person who's writing a third book on
17 this very topic. And I just want for everybody to
18 think to themselves, when this is documented, like
19 the researcher said earlier, we are looking at
20 your data, your research, your numbers. Are you
21 showing your children that you are standing on the
22 right side of history?

23 When this is documented, how will you
24 explain the stance that you took and who you stole

1 from another community that was already
2 vulnerable? How will you explain that to them?

3 And, by the way, to the lady who said we
4 don't have a high school, Phillips is a Level 2,
5 would you send your child there, I want to also go
6 on record that I picked to NTA when it was, you're
7 right, not a Level 2 school, it was a Level 3.
8 Level 3. Because I understood what was happening
9 at that school, and I saw it before it happened.
10 And we are blessed and proud to be a part of the
11 NTA community, and we don't have any intention of
12 letting them take it away.

13 Thank you.

14 LAILA WALKER: Hi, everybody. My name is
15 Laila Walker, and I go to South Loop Elementary
16 School. I'm in the 3rd grade. And I just wanted
17 to say that I think that my school shouldn't be
18 trying to shut down any other school, and no
19 school should be trying to shut down any other
20 school. And I just wanted to apologize for what
21 my school was trying to do. And if I had known,
22 because I just found out today, if I had known, I
23 probably would have tried to do something about
24 it.

1 MR. JOHNSON: This is our last speaker.

2 SPEAKER: I want to put a few more things in
3 since NTA parents get 2 minutes' time all the
4 time. So I wanted to finish a couple statements.

5 One, [inaudible] on behalf of a 3rd
6 grader, because I don't think this has been on the
7 record yet, when I was at Long Grove Homes, one of
8 the main concerns of families there is this. And
9 this follows up on Elizabeth's complaint, but her
10 name is Akia. Her dad's name is Maurice. There's
11 three kids in the family, a one-year-old, a third
12 grader, and fifth grader.

13 Under the new proposal, their grandpa
14 walks them to school every day. These kids are
15 going to be at different schools. That is the
16 major concern of the communities where there's a
17 lot of grandparents or people like Ms. Peaches,
18 who walks these kids to school, is how
19 logistically are they going to walk them.

20 And it's more than just about travel.
21 This little girl, only 5th grade, was worried
22 about what's going to happen to my baby brother or
23 sister that I can't look out for.

24 So to go back to my point, Bridgeport

1 people, I hear you that you want a high school.
2 But it is different to live in 500-, \$600,000
3 homes than to live in Long Grove and have your
4 grandparent have to be transporting you to three
5 different schools.

6 So I think -- think about what side
7 you're going to stand on and stand on the right
8 side of justice when you're thinking about these
9 things. It's easy for us to say I'm not a racist,
10 but maybe we should all take a look at ourselves
11 and think maybe there's a little part of me that's
12 racist or a big part of me that's racist and do
13 something about that.

14 My other thing to think about is this:
15 If this is engaging all of the community, all of
16 you elected officials need to keep your elected
17 official pages open for public comments.

18 MR. JOHNSON: We'd like to thank everybody
19 tonight for comments.

20 I do want to share with you who's in the
21 room so that if you have any questions for them.
22 From Office of Diverse Learner Supports and
23 Services, ODLSS, Shani Boone and Luis Rodriguez,
24 would you please stand just so they know who you

1 are in the rear if they have any questions.

2 For Students in Temporary Living
3 Situations, Onshelle Blackmon. There she is back
4 there.

5 And then from the Talent Office, Tiffany
6 Taylor. They will be at the back table, if you
7 have any specific questions for them.

8 I'd also like to make you aware our next
9 community meeting will be held next Tuesday,
10 January 16th, at the Second Presbyterian Church,
11 1936 South Michigan, from 6:00 to 8:00 o'clock
12 p.m.

13 Thank you all for being respectful.
14 Thank you all for coming. Be safe going home.

15 (WHICH WERE ALL THE PROCEEDINGS HAD.)

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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
2 COUNTY OF COOK) SS.

5 Rachel F. Gard, being first duly sworn,
6 on oath says that she is a Certified Shorthand
7 Reporter, Registered Professional Reporter, and
8 Certified Realtime Reporter doing business in the
9 City of Chicago, County of Cook and the State of
10 Illinois;

11 That she reported in shorthand the
12 proceedings had at the foregoing meeting;

13 And that the foregoing is a true and
14 correct transcript of her shorthand notes so taken
15 as aforesaid and contains all the proceedings had
16 at the said meeting.

RACHEL F. GARD, CSR, RPR, CRR
CSR No. 084-003324

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